Interview with Carleton S. Coon Jr.

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

AMBASSADOR CARLETON S. COON, JR.

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This is an interview with Ambassador Carleton S. Coon, Jr. on behalf of the Foreign Affairs Oral History Program. Today is October 26th, 1989. I am Charles Stuart Kennedy.

Q: Mr. Ambassador, how did you become interested in foreign affairs?

COON: I've always been interested in foreign affairs. You might say pre-natally so. My mother and father were on an expedition in the Rif mountains of Northern Morocco when I was carried there and dropped in Paris on the way home, so to speak, in 1927. My parents were always interested in overseas and expeditions and...

Q: Your father was an anthropologist?

COON: He was an anthropologist, right, at Harvard until about '48 or thereabouts when he moved down to Penn at that point. But there were always foreigners around when I was growing up. We had one excellent trip in my childhood when we went to the Azores and Morocco for six months. He had a sabbatical from Harvard in 1939. I was 12 at the time and that made a deep impression on me—it's an impressionable age.

Just at the end of the Second World War I was drafted. V-J Day came just in time, just during my basic training. Then I spent the year 1946 in Germany, first as a private and then as a reward for excellent behavior—a private first class. I was offered chances at OCS, Japanese language training, but my feeling at the time was that the war was over and I just wanted to do my time and get out. So I did. I was out by the end of the year.

But I had a year in Germany during which I became fairly fluent in the German language and discovered there were a lot of Germans around who were basically more interesting than some of the GIs who had decided to stay there rather than go home. And so it went. So naturally by 1948 when I was looking around in college for something to do the idea of the diplomatic service appealed to me.

Q: You were going where to college?

COON: Harvard. I had had a fling with music at that point. I had a couple semesters studying music but I decided that was no way to earn a living. I had visions of marrying and earning my way so I switched over to geography and graduated in geography in 1949 in June, and got married in June, and went off with my bride to the West Coast where I found that I had been accepted into the Foreign Service.

Q: You had taken the Foreign Service exam?

COON: I took the written exam the previous fall as a beginning senior, and I had taken the oral early in '49, and then I was accepted under some kind of a special deal where they were able to get out their backlog a bit. Anyway, I was in the Foreign Service as of August 2nd, 1949.

Q: Did you have a training course at all? Or were you pretty well thrown out into the field?

COON: I was part of an experimental group. I don't know whether this is of interest to your archivists or not. They probably have the information already. But the civil service

side of the State Department was getting a little tired of feeling like the inferior wing of the Department, and they saw how the Foreign Service office kept touting their superior quality entrance and so forth. So they decided they'd have a fancy entry program for budding young executives. They got this all set up and then found out that under their own regulations for some reason or other they couldn't do it. So they went to the Foreign Service, whose regulations were more flexible and said, “We want to bring in all these budding young hotshots from the universities. Will you let us bring them in under your umbrella so to speak?” And the Foreign Service, used as it was to negotiating with Arabs and orientals and Europeans, negotiated with the civil service and said, “Well, we've got a backlog of our own. We'll bring them in if you will fund our bringing in a half dozen of our own people with them.” The civil service said that was fine, and I was one of that half dozen.

Q: Did you come in actually as a Foreign Service Officer?

COON: Yes. Well, I came in as a Foreign Service Reserve Officer, FSR. I was earning a little over $2000 a year which was probably almost as much as the elevator operator. No, I'm sorry. I was a FSS— God knows how low they go, 16 or something like that. Anyway, if it weren't for the distinction it wouldn't have looked very attractive. They put us in FSI which was then housed in a couple of temporary buildings in the part of the block where the Secretary's office is now I would guess, on C Street. It didn't do very much in the way of training us as I remember. They had us there for a week or two during which mostly they gave us experimental tests as though we were a bunch of mutant rabbits or something like that, and try to figure out what made us tick.

Q: So you didn't feel as though you were part of a cohesive group coming in?

COON: Oh, it was a very cohesive group. We tribalized very rapidly and those of us who survive still remember the experience, I think. In fact we got so tired of these experimental tests that we began fudging them, and making a ridiculous thing out of them to the

point where they finally stopped giving them to us. The basic program was three month assignments as interns. Then we were supposed to find our own way.

So I was in this intern status from August 1949 until early July of 1950. My first assignment was answering public mail in the Public Views and Inquiry Section of something, something of the Office of Public Affairs. I answered mail mostly about people who wanted the State Department to impose a world calendar on the world and that sort of thing.

Then after three months I moved over to work for Evron Kirkpatrick and Howard Penniman who had just started something called the External Research Branch in INR. Dick Vine, who was also with me in this group, was the first intern there. I helped set that thing up, the liaison with the academics in the private academia. Dick had already won the first big battle which neither Penniman nor Kirkpatrick—Evron, of course, is Jeane Kirkpatrick's husband, awfully nice fellow—had had the bureaucratic skills to do what Dick managed somehow. There was then in INR a strong holdover of aboriginal types who felt that if a document was labeled unclassified, that in itself was a security classification and meant therefore that the document could not be released. Dick managed to ram through the revelation that if it said unclassified, it could be released. You think back and some of these things are a little bit...

Q: There are people who still have things squirreled away. It's power.

COON: I tasted power though really for the first time on my third assignment which was working with Sam Kopper, in the Division of North African Affairs which encompassed Morocco, Tunisia and Libya, and French West Africa.

Q: Because of pre-natal influence I take it.

COON: No, it just happened that way. I think I may have pushed a little in that direction, I can't remember. But anyway, I discovered that power in the State Department comes not from the barrel of a gun but from a certain combination of insensitivity and energy.

Q: How do you mean?

COON: I'll give one example which may not be felicitous in view of what happened afterward. But I consider myself responsible for the liberation of Libya from Italian rule because they were still negotiating the independence of Libya someplace overseas and our delegation was playing a fairly decisive role in it. And although our formal policy, I think, probably was to get the Italians out of there— decolonialization and all of that— the French and the Italian desks were very, very powerful at that point. EUR was running things and NEA was sort of a very, very inferior appendage to EUR.

Q: ...the battle of Africa in Northern — that went on for years.

COON: Oh, of course. It was inconceivable that Algeria could be part of Africa at that point. It was a department of France. Anyway, the French and Italian desk officers, following the lines of their respective ambassadors in Paris and Rome, were doggedly holding the line against any constructive move on our part in the negotiations. So I'd be given these instructions, and told to clear them with the French and Italian desk officers, and they wouldn't clear them. They'd just say no, it's contrary to what Ambassador so-and-so recommends—I mean reciting some really August name because in those days we had really important Foreign Service demigods occupying those positions, and things were at a stasis and had been for some months—paralysis before I arrived.

I consulted various people, and thought about the problem, and discovered that this combination of assertiveness and insensitivity would probably be the only answer. So I found that both of these gentlemen— the desk officers—had car pools, and I used to arrive just five minutes before car pool time and start arguing with them. I was too young and too insignificant, and too junior for them to get really mad at. They would have lost face by getting mad at a mere intern. On the other hand my arguments were sufficiently to the point so they couldn't just brush them aside. So they would find themselves mired in debate with me 15 minutes after they were supposed to go to their car pools with all their

other peers standing around yelling at them, and they'd finally capitulate and sign off just to get rid of me.

Q: The battle of the car pool...I might just note for the reader that people in a car pool all have to leave at the same time, so they can't hold up other people. So you could use a little car pool blackmail.

COON: I've never forgotten that technique. I mean, I've never had to use it in quite the same form since then but I spent a lot of my waking hours since then wandering around the corridors of the State Department clearing telegrams and I got pretty good at it.

Q: Usually after 5:00 o'clock?

COON: Not necessarily. Later on I perfected other techniques and ones that wouldn't hold me up from getting home either.

Q: After that probably you had a far better indoctrination into how life really works in the Department.

COON: Oh, yes, yes.

Q: This usually comes as a rather brutal shock as people reach upper ranks of the Foreign Service having been abroad. They haven't learned their lesson.

COON: I counseled young people more recently when I've not been quite as young, who asked me my advice about whether to go to Fletcher or Georgetown or this or that. They all seem to assume these days that you have to have a doctorate in foreign affairs before you can even think of going into the Foreign Service. I said, “Look, I started when I was 22 years and 4 months old. And by the time I was as old as I would have had to be to get my doctorate, I'd gotten so much experience of a practical nature under my belt that I really knew what I was doing and I would not trade the experience I had in those first two or

three, or four years of the Foreign Service for any amount of formal education." By the time I was 25 I was off and running, and running hard and effectively.

Q: Your first assignment overseas was as a Kreis Officer?

COON: Kreis Resident Officer, yes.

Q: We used to call them Kreis f#rhers.

COON: No, KROs was our preferred designation but there wasn't anything very Christ-like about us, I must say.

Q: Would you tell what this was, and what you did?

COON: Well, June came along and I was finished with my internship in North African Affairs and Bill Turpin, who had been doing something else—Bill was another classmate of mine—and I were called into some office in Personnel and they said, "We're going to send you two over to Germany, in Bavaria, to process refugees." And we said, "That doesn't sound very exciting, but what the hell, needs of the Service and so forth." So we went over to Germany. We got to Frankfurt just the day after somebody came in and said there was a looming crisis in staffing KRO positions. The guy there, I've forgotten his name, said, "Would you like to be Kreis Resident Officers instead?" And Bill, who had no idea what a Kreis Resident Officer was, but knew he didn't want to be a Visa Officer said, "Yes." And I said, "I think so, but what is a Kreis Resident Officer?" So he said, "Eddie so and so is the KRO down at Rhinegau, and he'll take you down there and you'll see a typical officer at work." So he took us down to Rhinegau, in the heart of the finest wine producing region of Germany, an hour or two drive from Frankfurt. And we sat around the office while he did a couple of inconsequential things, and then he took us to a "wine probe" at the Von Munmsche Vineyards. We got down in this basement where there were about 50 old bottles lined up. And this old guy with a nose like Santa Claus went down the list, and down each bottle we tasted, and he talked about each one in terms of its similarity to a

different kind of woman. And by the end I was convinced. I said, “Yes, all right, I'll be a Kreis Resident Officer.” So they sent me off to a town called Buedingen, up in the hills, where the only beverage they produced was undrinkable apple cider. But anyway, it was a great experience.

Q: By this time—we're talking 1950—the war had been over for five years, supposedly you were supposed to be out there to help the Germans back into democracy...the Germans knew what they were about. What was a 22-year-old kid going to do?

COON: I was 23 by then, but the German society was at that time, and I guess still is to some extent, highly graded in a chronological kind of way, and it was sort of ridiculous for me to be out there telling them they all had to be good democrats and republicans and go to town hall meetings, and so forth. I think the real facts of the matter—and I've never really studied this, but certainly it was clear at the time—was that the military government had a way of hanging on.

Q: American military?

COON: They had a good thing going. They didn't want to give it up. And all the good people had gone home, and started work again. It was just like the regiment I was with in Bremen in 1946, all the good people went home and there was nothing left but the bums, and the drifters, who were staying on. That's a little bit of an exaggeration but not that much. And liaison and security offices had been established out in the county seats, way back when there really wasn't anything when Germany was flat. It had to provide essential services and to exercise control. By the time 1950 came around, their functions had withered away. I mean it didn't take the Germans long to reestablish post offices and police departments, and tax capabilities. They were pretty well organized to begin with and once they got over the shell shock of defeat things fell back into place. So these guys were left with essentially nothing to do except maybe they controlled firearms and they controlled the passes that allowed Germans to visit their relatives in East Germany. And

the rest of the time they were black-marketing and whoring around and generally creating a stink in the minds of the Germans.

Well, General Clay appreciated this and—my recall—this great civilian who was there at the time?

Q: McCloy?

COON: John McCloy and Clay, in my opinion—I don't know whether the record will justify this—but those two gentlemen cooked up the idea of getting some bright young State Department people in to replace these liaison and security officers, as a means of getting them out and cleaning up the act. This was always seen as a temporary thing and by 1952 when I left the program was virtually wound up.

Q: The whole idea was more to ease the military out rather than to perform some specific tasks?

COON: Well, I'm giving you what I think are the realities. The fiction at the time was that we were running a Public Affairs Program, we were running an intelligence program, and we were running a “reorientation” program. And what I actually did, that had teeth in it, was I controlled all hunting permits, and I had personally to sign an inter- zonal pass for every German that wanted to go to the East Zone. And I perfected my signature during those days. I would sit down and sign about 100 pieces of paper. So about 100 people from the county of Buedingen could go visit in the East Zone. And I answered the complaints of the German hunters who claimed that their lands were being overrun by wild boar, and went off and shot a couple of them myself at one time and another. For the rest of it I had an Opel Capitaine, two Volkswagens, and a couple film projectors, and some happy-go-lucky young Germans who knew how to project film and we ran a films program all over 102 villages in the county. I went around—I got to all but four or five of the villages while I was there—and I talked to them. As a matter of fact by now my German was quite fluent and very helpful. I organized things, and I participated in debates, and occasionally I sent

in a report as to what Pastor Niemoller was doing—he was from that region, and that sort of thing. But basically I was on my own. I wrote my own ticket. I did what I could and managed to do quite a lot. It was like having your own post.

Q: Just to get a slice of the time. The Korean War had just started, the Cold War was in full swing. Was this an area where there was any feeling of internal Communist menace, or anything like this?

COON: There was a local communist movement that had its cells and its organizations there. I do recall one or two times when I was in open debate with the communist Bundestag delegate from Buedingen. It was fun. He was talking about unilateral disarmament in West Germany and that was what we should do. I'd been reading Wilhelm Busch, the great German poet and satirist of the late 19th century—a sort of an Ogden Nash of German, and who had written a lovely little poem about the fox and the hedgehog which was very appropriate—where the fox tells the hedgehog, “Now just lay down your quills and we'll all live in peace.” And the hedgehog says to the fox, “Have your teeth pulled out first, fox, and then we'll talk about it.” I quoted that, and the audience loved it. I don't remember too many episodes of that nature, but I remember it was a very rich experience for me. It was a time when I was really operating on all cylinders, and learning fast, and doing a great deal—without getting any credit for it, of course.

Q: I think a certain amount of emphasis should be made for looking at the growth of the Foreign Service of really our era. When I came in, at an early time, an awfully lot of responsibility was there to be had. There was quite a lot of independence. It was not such a computerized bureaucracy as it is today. And I think this probably developed a more free-wheeling spirit in later groups coming in.

COON: I've been arguing consistently over the past 30-odd years that the Foreign Service is developing in the wrong direction. That where you have reasonably amiable relations with a country, and where you have some desire to know what is going on in the country,

the way to handle it is to have a substantial embassy and then have one-man posts spotted all over the place. And have them do without classified material. If something sensitive comes along, they hop a fast freight into the capital and talk about it, or report it there. They can do the consular work, and do the informational work. I actually put that in writing in a fairly serious way when I was consul in Tabriz. In Iran, in those days, it would have vastly increased our understanding of what was going on, and it would have been much more economical and efficient. And this was a major point, it would have provided a wonderful training ground for junior officers. We can't do that because we have to control everything to a greater degree. If you beef up your Inspection Corps you run around and inspect the hell out of these kids every now and then, every three months or so.

Q: They can't do that much damage.

COON: They can't do that much damage, sure.

Q: I guess we better move on. You had quite a change of scene. You went to the Middle East. You went to Damascus in 1952 to '56 as Economic Officer. How did that assignment come about?

COON: I was going to be assigned to Bavaria to run one of the America Hauser down there in the USIA program. I was in Bonn. I talked to John Patton Davies, who was one of the grand old men of the Service who had gotten burned by McCarthy. In fact he was virtually destroyed by McCarthy, and he was sort of holed up licking his wounds in Bonn. And he said, “You shouldn't go to Bavaria. You should go to the Middle East with your background.” So he talked me into Damascus.

Actually you've missed one rather amusing episode. As I was getting ready to go to Damascus, the consul in Rabat, John Dorman, began shrieking that his staff was being gutted because it was a 3-man post and one of his officers would be gone all summer.

Q: This was before Morocco...

COON: Yes. We had a Consulate in Rabat that was our principal post in Morocco. So they sent me, with my wife and two-and-a-half children, to Morocco for two months TDY to keep John Dorman happy. I'd already gotten a promotion, I was a second secretary, and John Dorman never heard of the Kreis Resident Program or anything like that. He was rather stuffy and a very proper Foreign Service Officer of the old school. Well, anyway, to make a long story short: I disappointed him very much because I didn't know the difference between a passport and a visa really. I was supposed to do a lot of consular work, and I was supposed to be fluent in French, and I wasn't. I was awful in French, and he didn't know what to do with me. So he took me around very properly—at least I had calling cards—and visited every other member of the consular corps on courtesy calls to announce my presence. Then he put me to work translating French language newspapers which anybody could have done. And then a few weeks later he took me around again to say farewell. And then I went on my way to Damascus feeling somewhat chastened by this, but rather less than convinced that the career Foreign Service—all of the old line—had a lock on all the wisdom of life.

Anyway, I got to Damascus, and I took over the Consular Section from Bill Eagleton who remains a close friend. Bill was glad to see me because his interests were political and he was just holding down the Consular Section with his left hand. I worked very hard to discover all about the consular routine. I got there just in time to learn all the old regulations and then in December they were changed by a new Act, and I had to learn that.

Q: What was the situation in Syria. We're talking...you were there '52 to '56. What was the situation at that time?

COON: Relatively stable. They only had one major coup, and in the preceding couple of years they'd had several. So everybody sort of complimented me on my good judgement in arriving during a period of calm. Relatively non-hostile. The Syrians were very sore at us over the Israeli business. I mean it was still a new experience for them being mad at us.

And there were a lot of individual Syrians who had relatives in the United States, or wanted to go to the United States, or admired the United States, so there was a lot of goodwill there too.

Q: This is almost hard to imagine. We're doing this interview in 1989 when the Syrians have been so hostile to us for so long.

COON: The Syrian government.

Q: Your Ambassador at that time was one of the great men of the Middle Eastern service, wasn't he? James Moose.

COON: Yes.

Q: How did he operate? What was your impression of the gentleman?

COON: Very quietly, and behind the scenes. He was a stickler for protocol but he was an Arabic scholar too, and he really understood a great deal more than he let on. He didn't have much interest in the Consular Section and he left before I moved over into the Economic Section which I did after about two-thirds of my time was over. So I never really got to know him the way Eagleton, or Atherton, or Bill Brewer did who were three of my colleagues there. But I had great admiration for him. Do you want anecdotes?

Q: Yes, I do. Very much so because I think these illustrate how...

COON: There was a little dried fruit and nut man from Amherst, Massachusetts who was brought over under a UN program to advise the Syrians on their nut trees, and their dried fruit trees. Of course they'd been growing nuts and drying their fruit back to a period where this gentlemen's ancestors were still living in caves, I think. But anyway, he was brash and feckless, a little guy. And the Secretary of the Agriculture Ministry had a cocktail party to receive him, and we were all there. He said, “What's your name?” I said, “Coon.” He said, “Ha, ha, that's funny.” Then he turned to a quiet gentleman who was standing there, and

said, “What's your name?” The man stuck out his hand and said, “The name is James S. Moose, junior.” “Ah,” he said, “You're the Ambassador. Well, how nice. It must be awfully nice to be an Ambassador.” “Well,” said Ambassador Moose, “There are various views on that.” And then the visitor said, “Isn't it funny. Here we have two animals in the same reception. We've got Coon, and here we've got Moose.” Moose, without turning a hair, and without changing his tone of voice, said, “Yes, there are many animals in the Foreign Service and in addition to Moose and Coon, there are Lyon, Tiger and Hare.” And then he went on, I can't remember them all—Crowe—but he went through I'd say a dozen and a half. He picked them out and ran right through them. Then he turned on his heel and didn't speak to the guy again.

Q: Did you have much dealing with the Syrian officials?

COON: I learned a lot about dealing with foreign officials, yes. More later when I was doing economic work, than earlier. In the earlier stage, consular work, I was dealing mostly with police, and dealing through my local employees. Again, I could spin off hours worth of anecdotes about it, but I'll skip...

Q: I'd like to have a little feeling about what type of dealings—say with the police there at that time. Did you have any particular problems, trying to get Americans who had gotten in trouble or something?

COON: Oh, I had all kinds of consular problems. I could go on and on about them, but they were mostly of the Americans own makings and some of them involved born-again Christians insisting on handing out tracts and getting judged for that. There was one stupid woman who was married to a Syrian and divorced, and was talked into coming back with their child. Then the guy took the child and spirited it off and threw her out. She went home and I remember the headlines, “Tulsa Girl Sold at Syrian Slave Block” in the Tulsa newspaper and there was a certain amount of Congressional flak. I could go on at some

length on that but then when I was in the economic side I really did cultivate some people in an attempt to get at sources of information.

I think the high point for me, and very, very instructive because it taught me a lot about how governments work, was this: There was a new five-year plan coming out and I was very anxious to figure out what was in it, and then give a report on it. I don't suppose anybody in Washington was that concerned, but anyway it was one of the big things in my job. So I cultivated this guy who I had already known some. I guess he had been trained in America, as I recall he spoke English. He worked in the guts of the organization that was doing the plan. So he let me in one day, and then let me have an advance look at it as it was just about to go to press. Here were all the different ministries, and different major sectors of the economy with a number of Syrian pounds in millions or something like that to be allocated to each for the next five years under the plan. And I have a bad habit, I'm quick at arithmetic, and I add things up when I go along. So I looked at this column, and I added it up, and the total was 70 million pounds greater than the sum of the individual constituent parts. I pointed this out to the guy, he said, “No, you must be wrong.” He added it up three times and he scratched his head, and said, “Well, I guess we'll give it to the railway ministry.” And they went to press that way.

And that's the sort of thing...I mean a junior and an impressionable officer can derive a great deal of wisdom.

Q: Did you get free passes on the railway?

COON: No, no. I never told the Syrians about that obviously. I might have gotten the guy in trouble.

Q: What type of government did the Syrians have?

COON: Bureaucratic. The French had endowed them with a second class replica of their own government in ways of doing things.

Q: What about the feeling within our embassy in Damascus towards Israel? Did you find that you were an Arabist sitting there and saying, "Why are we throwing all this support towards Israel?" Or were things not black and white in those days?

COON: Things weren't quite as black and white. In the first place, I wasn't an Arabist. Eagleton had studied Arabic, Brewer had studied Arabic, and a number of these people had studied Arabic and they suggested that I go to Beirut and study Arabic when I finished with Damascus, but I declined. Yes, there was a feeling even then it was pretty obvious to those who were closely attuned to the facts that the creation of the State of Israel was probably the single most damaging thing to US prestige and interest abroad that's happened since the Second World War, and with the long-term after effect. What it was doing to our credibility, and our position—not just in the Arab states—but throughout the Third World was already evident to anybody who was thinking about it, and looking at it. And the intransigence of the Israelis was already fairly evident, although the Syrians were no better.

I remember the Jordan Waters plan; Eric Johnston was pushing that while I was there. And the Syrians led him down the garden path, and waited until the last minute, and then pulled the rug out from under him. So the Syrians were more responsible than any of the other Arabs, I think, for the fact that the Arabs always were missing the boat, playing catch up. They always agreed to meet a price that was no longer valid. In other words the Israelis are constantly upping the ante, and the Arabs are always playing catch up one step behind, and that's largely the fault of the Syrians, I think.

I'll say only one thing that...shortly before I left, in fact just before I left, there was a cocktail party some place and a particularly obnoxious young Syrian journalist came up and started haranguing me about why I was personally responsible as an American for planting "this cancer in the breast of the Arab nation". Well this cancer in the breast of the Arab nation theme was one that we'd all put up with over the years, and everybody was sick and tired of it. I could see all my colleagues from the embassy sort of looking at me and figuring,

“Coon is about ready to blow. Let's enjoy it.” And I did. I felt kind of a rushing sound in my ears, and I heard myself saying to my great surprise, “You people aren't ever going to get anyplace until you recognize that Israel is here to stay.” And, of course, this was anathema, you didn't say this to Syrians. So immediately there was a hush in the room, and we squared off and this guy said, “Why? Why must we recognize that this blight, this Israel is here to stay?” And I heard myself saying, “It's here to stay because no one else is going to get rid of it for you, and you don't have the guts to do the job yourself.” And everybody in the room just, “Oh.” This guy turned to an Indian diplomat, and he said, “Did you hear what he said?” The Indian, an aristocrat of the old British school said, “Yes, and furthermore I think he's quite right” which devastated the guy. Because the Indians were on their side, of course. The point apropos of your question is that everybody else in the embassy was glad that I'd done it. It vented things for a whole lot of them, and nobody ever spoke to me about it. I mean I got away without any particular censure.

Q: In this interview we try to go back somewhat in time to think about how we felt at the time. Was there any questioning of what were the American interests in the Middle East? I mean real interest. There was the obvious political one, which is the State of Israel, and the Friends of Israel in the United States. But as a professional Foreign Service group we're supposed to look at things and say, “What are our world interests.” What do you think were our interests in the Middle East at the time? I'm talking about American interests, what we should be doing there.

COON: I wasn't very close to that side of it in the Consular Section, but of course I sat in on staff meetings. But again, memory fails. I don't remember the details, but two features loom in my mind in terms of the boiler-plate we were getting from Washington; what we were told were the American interests in the region.

The first, of course, was Israel, and its preservation; and the second was oil. I think those two themes have been fairly hardy perennials over the years. I think were I to answer this question with exact recall of where we stood in 1956 when I left, I think I would probably

cite those two as dominating the US consensus as to where its interests lay. I think I felt then, I certainly have felt since, that that's a very distorted and essentially harmful way of looking at it. But still the hard nosed realist back in Washington is afraid of AIPAC (American Israeli Political Action Committee). So they don't want to say anything about Israel because they'll get gunned down if they do, like Percy was, the Senator from Illinois. So Israel is a sacred cow, and has been all along. You might say that the Israeli lobby has terrorized the rest of the policy establishment for forty years now, and very successfully.

And the other one, the oil interests, the hard nosed realists who accept Israel because they're afraid not to, will take oil as a sort of counter-balancing thing, and we've got to keep the oil flowing, and so forth.

Q: It tends to flow no matter what happens.

COON: Yes. I mean this is of “vital interest.” In other words, America will die if the flow stops. It did, and we didn't.

Q: One further thing about the period as a snapshot of the times. What was our feeling about, “the Soviet menace” within the Middle East, particularly in Syria at that time?

COON: Oh, yes. John Foster Dulles came right on through and sat in the Ambassador's office and sort of conducted a staff meeting at one point, and the Cold War was very much with us. The Soviet's embassy was very much around and evident, and there was a great deal in cold war terms. I was there when the first Damascus International Fair opened and I was in charge of orchestrating the Country Team effort to report on every little tractor and piece of equipment that the East Bloc brought in because this was a magnificent opportunity to find out more about what the Soviets were doing.

You can date the economic cold war pretty much to the latter part of my tenure in Damascus. I think the Soviets' offer to build a steel plant in India was '56 or something like that, and '54-'55 they were just beginning to shed their sort of Stalinist conspiratorial

attitudes toward the Third World and open up. And our initial reaction was one of intense suspicion and mistrust.

Q: Did we feel that Syria was ripe to be plucked by the Soviet bear?

COON: Well, those of us who were living there didn't feel that way. I think there was some feeling in Washington that the Syrians in effect had become crypto-Communist and had sold out to the Soviets. But I can come to that better later on when we get toward the end of the decade, and I was specializing in that.

Q: All right. Then you moved to New Delhi.

COON: Yes.

Q: This was from '56 to '59 as Economic Officer. What was the situation in India at that time as we saw it?

COON: I might mention, because it was one of my more brilliant memories, that my wife and I chose to drive there from Damascus in a Ford station wagon. This was considered very crazy, and at first was vetoed by the State Department, but I lobbied while I was back in Washington, got permission to do it. It took us a lot longer than we expected and I spent half my time underneath the Ford, rather than in it, trying to fix its shock absorbers and one thing and another...

The only paved roads I saw between Iraq and Pakistan were in the cities, so we were somewhat notorious on our arrival in Delhi. And I was in the Economic Section and I was supposed to report on industrial development, five-year plan matters, and population, and stuff like that.

Q: In India, what were the sort of major developments going on in India at the time you were there, that were of interest to the United States?

COON: There had been a war with Pakistan, the first major war, and the Indians had been aided by the Russians, and the Pakistanis by the Americans. And there was a great deal of feeling about American arms aid to Pakistan. The country had basically been pro-western, pro- American until then but was full of very serious doubts as to its future orientation. Nehru was very much in the ascendancy. He was making marvelous speeches all over the place, was furnishing me with a wonderful case study in how you pull a disparate bunch of people together and instill a sense of nationhood in them, and get them to work together. The democratic processes was still rather new and were shaking down. I mean the political process, the judiciary and so forth, was in place from the British days. A lot of things were in place from the British days, railways, administration, a whole lot of things. But how does a country of 450 million—I think about in those days, or maybe 350 million when they were independent. How does a country of 350 million, soon to be a billion people, govern itself in a democratic fashion?

And I did examine in depth some questions. I wrote an analysis, for example, of what socialism really means to the average Indian—something quite different from what it means to the average American.

But basically I was running around the country a great deal. I was traveling a lot and looking at factories, and looking at various developments here and there.

Q: What was your impression of the Indian economy at that time? I mean you were looking at this, you could see it was already approaching a half a billion people and nothing was stopping it. It was still a relatively poor country. What was your impression about its future on the economic side?

COON: I find it hard to separate out my impressions at that time from my impressions subsequently because I've been involved in Indian affairs so intermittently ever since, and not just from a Kathmandu perspective. But I don't recall believing anything at that time of a fundamental nature that I've had to change since then. I mean nothing has

happened since that has really surprised me in terms of my basic analysis. For example the gradual but increasingly rapid emergence of a modern India sort of sitting on the shoulders of traditional India. So you had hundreds of millions of people in the villages living—the women gathered and gossiping around the well—and essentially a bullock driven economy. Not much different from the kind of life style of a couple thousand years ago, and not improving very much except for certain elements of public health which made it possible for the population to increase much too rapidly.

And then you had an industrialized urbanized educated India with an elite sitting on top. A lot of rather restless factory workers and dispossessed urban people. And it was a totally different society which was rather like American society in that American society was fed and formed by a process of immigration, but from outside. Whereas in India this society is being fed by immigration from within the country. And that picture has stayed with me, and has stood me in good stead since then. And I think that is a structural view of India that makes sense and holds up over the years.

Q: How did the two sorts of official societies get together? I'm talking about the American diplomat, and the Indians. I mean here you have in some ways, as somebody from the outside described, as two highly vocal groups full of advice for the other. They often got spurious advice, and they're really rather disparate in a way, aren't they?

COON: No. I think what you need to do in dealing with an Indian official is to forget your restraint and let yourself run off at the mouth. They love it. I remember I went to Bhopal, and I was going to see the Secretary of the State Planning Commission. I had set up an appointment with him and I went around to his house and he carefully served me some tea. We sat down and he said, “Now, Mr. Coon, before we start on planning I want to ask you a question. What is the meaning of life?” So I answered that, took me about 15 minutes, then he had about 15 minutes, and we got along fine—a wonderful time. Since then, since I've been on the Indian desk on several occasions, I've had occasion to argue at great length with my Indian diplomatic friends about various aspects of our policy, and

their policy. And I find sitting down and making a very articulate persuasive presentation involving kinds of legalistic arguments, and Brahminical arguments they hadn't thought up before, really appeals to them. And they'll come back and they'll come up with new arguments which their government hasn't sanctioned and you'll have at it. And by the time you get through, you'll go away and you will be in complete agreement as to what good fellows you both are. Even though neither one of you has budged a bit from his government's position. But you will go away with a better feel for what makes the other fellow tick, and that is important.

The Indian diplomat tends to be rather full of rhetoric, and in the last analysis he gets into a discussion like this, and the discussion becomes more important than the substance. It's more important to him to have a good bull session, than it is to score points. Americans who are capable of that kind of verbal effervescence, seem to get along quite well with like-minded Indians. I mean certainly I give myself a credit for a high content of BS, but I'm nothing compared to the great master of all times in that department which was Chester Bowles. And Chet got along fine with the Indians. He got along too well with them.

Q: Well now, let me ask the obvious question; you have the quintessential Vermont Yankee there—Ellsworth Bunker—whom I would think would be just the reverse. How did he get along with the Indians.

COON: He got along fine with them, and that's a very good point. I never quite understood it because he was very laconic, very shrewd, tight-lipped but...I guess they valued him because he was effective. The smarter ones knew that he was effective; the same reason they didn't really value Chet, for all they loved him. Because he wasn't effective in Washington, and Ellsworth was.

Q: Maybe an essential point that we're talking about is, how did you in the embassy—I'm speaking of the embassy as such, and the officers in their field—feel about dealing with Washington. Because we were at the time when we were almost always at odds with the

Indians because the Indians were doing things in the Third World that we felt were wrong and in a way there was almost a sense of betrayal that they weren't on our side, and they were siding up too often with the Soviets. Were we trying to understand what they were doing and trying to pass that on to Washington, or did you feel that we were just reporting on what these beastly Indians were doing?

COON: Well, the area in which I was supposed to report really was way outside the domains that you're talking about. I was supposed to report on whether in fact they were putting in heavy weapons, or having a machinery plant up in such and such a place with Soviet aid, and how it was coming along, and what was the outlook for such and such a dam project. And what were the contours of the second and third five-year plan, what were the dynamics. I mean, what was the process that helped them determine how to allocate their resources. So I was working on that side of things pretty much.

I did mention that I did a report on socialism. I think I got pretty good marks from the embassy for that one. Ellsworth noted, and liked it, and Carol Laise who was then in the Political Section, took particular interest in it. I mean it was the first time she'd noticed me, and then I think it was probably good for my career that she did. But in that I tried to explain socialism in terms of what had happened in the Indian villages. And the equation in the Indian village mind between the village banya [Hindi term for merchant sub-caste], who was the money lender at notorious rates, and capitalism. And what happened in the 19th century was that the banyas took their money from the villages and moved into the cities and established factories. And the villages started getting over populated and as excess population drained off from the villages into the cities they found themselves working in factories for the same banyas at the same extortionate practices. So this business of anti-capitalism had very deep roots.

And when the Americans came in, they came in with a totally different set of business practices, and ethics, but they came into an area, and to a public opinion that had already been pretty deeply polluted by these other events. And they couldn't understand why they

weren't making out. There was a lot more to it than that, but essentially I was trying to explain something about India to the US government, and it worked. It was helpful. That despatch has been quoted and was used in various ways.

Q: There was a feeling then that the embassy was playing a role of almost intermediary between these...

COON: Not intermediary, interpreter. There's a difference. Interpreter, yes. Intermediary, no. I don't think, certainly not during Ellsworth's time, that we found ourselves as an embassy in the position of advocacy. I think Ellsworth managed to avoid that. With Chet it was different, of course. Chet was totally an advocate of the Indian position. And as I say, he was less effective and credible in Washington as a result.

Q: Then shall we move on to...you then came back to Washington. You were in the Department from 1959 to '63. Was the whole time in Cyprus affairs?

COON: No, no. The Cold War had taken on an economic dimension in the "50s. The Russians were extending aid to all these places, instead of just trying to undermine their governments. Congress didn't understand what was going on. A Congressional committee grilled Doug Dillon who was at that point Under Secretary, and said, “What are you going to do about this? This new and insidious form of the god-less communist threat.” And Dillon, thinking fast, gave the standard bureaucratic response. He said, “We're just now setting up a staff to study it, sir.” And I came back and I was recruited on to that staff. It was called U/CEA, Communist Economic Affairs. So for the first year and a half, a year and three-quarters after I was back, I was a member of this small illustrious think-tank—a bunch of mavericks who thought heretical thoughts about what the Soviets were doing. And Bob Terrill, the director, had this big map up of the world with different shades of red and pink on the various countries. African states were just then beginning to emerge, and most of them were fairly feverish at that point and we set up various mechanisms for compiling statistics. And I helped organize an annual report on economic relations with the

Sino-Soviet Bloc that was levied on each country to the woe of my peers. A lot of people have not admired me for my role in that. But it was a pretty good requirement when it started. It got corrupted by bureaucratic processes. I got one good field trip out of it. And then Roy Atherton took pity on me. Roy at that point was Cyprus desk officer, and he was leaving and he wanted a suitable successor. So he and I connived and I got myself into GTI. That would have been fairly early “61.

Q: GTI means Greece, Turkey and Iran?

COON: Yes. That was the third branch of NEA at that point. The first branch being the Arabs, and the second branch being the South Asians, and the third being GTI.

Q: What was the situation as we saw it on Cyprus when you were there? This would be around '61.

COON: '61-'62. It was fairly calm but lots of problems. I had a very bizarre situation in dealing with the Cypri embassy because the Ambassador, Xenon Rossides, was in New York all the time. He was a Greek. And the Charge in Washington was a Turk and his subordinate was another Greek. And they were fighting a civil war even then. They were just fighting with words more than bullets. So I would have to have one set of responses for the Turk, and another set for Rossides when he would come down every now and then to contradict everything the Turk said. I really loved that assignment because it gave full scope to my propensity to argue heatedly about emotional issues, because there's nothing more emotional than the issue of Turks to the Greek Cypriots, or vice versa.

I think in small ways I contributed to a sensible policy, and things were going along very well until the fall of '62 when the Chinese attacked the Indians. The Indians crumbled and John Kenneth Galbraith decided it was time for us to set up a major arms program for India, and came back and decapitated several senior Foreign Service officers in the Office of South Asian Affairs. And the Bureau wanted somebody to honcho the arms sales program to India. So they looked around and decided, “Coon isn't doing anything. That

Cyprus thing is quiet." So they told me to move across the hall and occupy a new position on the India desk. And I said, "I can't because Cyprus will blow up if I do." They said, "Oh, nonsense." So I moved across the hall, and Cyprus blew up— Christmas of '62.

Q: What happened?

COON: What happened? They started fighting. No, I should consult the record before I make such a glib statement. Makarios did something that sort of deeply offended the Turks. In effect he declared that the Turks would be getting a bum deal in the future; the Greeks would be running the Turks, or whatever. Makarios was very slippery, very astute...he was one of the two or three great statesmen of the century, in my opinion, in terms of just sheer brain-power.

Q: A big leader for a small country.

COON: But anyway, he pulled a fast one and the Turks knew it was there. Nobody else did, and they started reacting the way Turks do and they got very, very dicey. So I went back without instructions, the desk being vacant, and just continued working as the Cyprus desk officer until the end of the year when they hauled me back because things were really heating up on the Indian arms sale business. So I was quite busy during that period. Then finally they got somebody else to replace me on the Cyprus desk, and things have been in bad shape ever since on Cyprus.

Q: Let me just go back. Were we playing much of a role in Cyprus?

COON: No. Fraser Wilkins was our Ambassador there, and no, we weren't.

Q: Could we have?

COON: Yes, we could have.

Q: Doing what?

COON: Talking, diplomacy. What diplomacy is supposed to be all about. Seeing an emergent problem, and taking steps to make its emergence less likely. Chipping away at the hard rocks on which the comity between the Greeks and Turks eventually floundered. But we weren't that concerned. We were a little concerned because Cy Sulzberger wrote an article about Cyprus when I first took over the desk that said it was heading for the rocks. And for a couple of minutes there, there was a flurry of White House interest. And in fact, there was a young staff assistant at the National Security Council, named Hal Saunders, who came around and talked to me for quite a while. Oh, I might add that my Cyprus incumbency overlapped the inauguration of John Kennedy. In the Eisenhower years the bureaucracy had been very, very straight laced and highly organized, and if Hal had strolled into my office and sat on the corner of my desk, and said, “How are things in Cyprus, Carl?” the whole structure would have quivered, and I would have immediately have had to do a practically verbatim memcon, which would have gone straight up, and been read up the line. Everybody would have been snuffling and snorting, and saying, “What's this interloper from outside the Department doing talking to one of our desk officers?” But as soon as Kennedy was inaugurated, in came Hal and said, “What's going on in Cyprus, Carl? Tell me what you really think.” And I did.

Q: Was there much more of that...

COON: It was loose, and open. The old-timers didn't like it. I thought it was wonderful. It was a chance for me to explain what the real situation was, someplace where it mattered other than to my immediate superior who already knew but nobody beyond him cared, or had time to. I wouldn't say they didn't care, but they didn't have time to care. They were too damn busy even then with places like Lebanon.

But anyway that was an interesting permutation that took place during the Cyprus thing.

What was your question again?

Q: I was just wondering. You say diplomacy would have helped. I'm just wondering. Do you think diplomacy could have really done much in terms of...I mean, after all, the Greeks and the Turks have been going at each other since the time of Darius or something.

COON: Yes, I know, I know. Well, one never knows. It's a “what if” question, and not having separate time capsules to check these things out...let me just say, I was dissatisfied with the flaccidness of our policy and would have appreciated a more aggressive effort to isolate and erode some of these hard points in the relationship.

Q: Just touching on the Indian arms business. Communist China had attacked India up in the Himalayas, and had defeated them rather soundly and we were organized in an emergency arms aid program to them. Had this helped things with us with the Indians, turned things around at all?

COON: It helped enormously for a little while. But John Kenneth Galbraith made one of the great classical misperceptions of South Asia. I don't suppose you'll get this coming out of him, but certainly it was my perception, from where I sat, and I think a detailed study of his policy messages to Washington would bear out that his basic approach was that, “We have built up capital with the Indians by arming them against China. We have built up capital previously with the Pakistanis by arming them against Russia. Now is the time for us to cash in our chips, and get a Kashmir settlement that once and for all will get rid of this animus between India and Pakistan.” Well, you can see the magnitude of the misconception. The animus not being based solely on Kashmir. Kashmir being as much a symptom as a cause. And the sheer arrogance to think that we had enough chips to effect something this basic. But Kenji [refers to Galbraith - “Ken” plus the Indian affectionate honorific “ji”] for all his brilliance, and he is a brilliant man, and he's a very likeable man. He is a very articulate, and humorous guy. As an individual I find him enchanting. But this was a colossal error on his part. And he has enough of an ego so he would not suffer being told that it was a colossal error. He somehow saw the Kashmir problem as a kind of fiendishly complicated jigsaw puzzle, which only he had the intelligence to solve. So he sat

there with maps, and charts, and generals, and statesmen, and so forth, and he snookered the British High Commissioner into joining his camp. And he cozied the Indians and the Paks up to a certain point where Nehru suddenly...Nehru went along with this for quite a while just to keep Kenji happy and to keep the arms coming from America because he needed them badly at that point. But as soon as Nehru saw that Kenji was getting into a position where he could do something affecting Indian interests, basic interests, as India perceived them, Nehru wasn't there anymore. He pulled the rug out from under leaving Kenji spinning. And the dispute simmers on. The goodwill that we gained from arming India was very rapidly dissipated.

The other thing Kenji did, he did manage to ram this through to a successful conclusion, an air defense agreement between India and the United States where we could come to India's defense. It was almost but not quite a treaty alliance, or a security treaty alliance relationship. It wasn't quite that because the Indians, even in their moment of maximum desperation, were not about to sign up as military allies of the United States. But it was a lot closer than they were comfortable with but Ken managed to get them to sign that. That was '73, I think. In '76 was it, it was not very much later after Tabriz when I was back on the India desk...it was only a couple of years later, after the air defense agreement had been signed, that I accompanied some National War College group to talk to some high Indian brass...

Q: You talking about '66? I have you on the Indian desk from '65 to '68.

COON: The air defense agreement was before I went to Tabriz. That was '63, and when I came back I was on the India desk, '65-'66. It was in that period. I'm sorry. I'm mixing my ''60s and my ''70s up. I had this occasion, in a couple of years it was as though the air defense agreement didn't exist. No, it was later than that, it was in '68. I was a student at the National War College. They had a top Indian general who was there talking to the National War College and the students gave all the pre-programmed questions. Then I asked him about the air defense agreement. He was totally startled, totally lost his

composure, and he pretended he couldn't remember it. It became a dead letter, in other words, almost while the ink was still wet.

So those were Kenji's two achievements, and the way he blew the credit we got. It was by an unsuccessful attempt to ram a Kashmir solution down the throats of the unwilling Indians and Pakistanis, and through the conclusion of an air defense agreement that was dead the moment it was signed.

Q: Looking chronologically you went to Tabriz as principal officer.

COON: Yes. I had about seven or eight, nine very vigorous months working on this arms business for India, and then I went to Tabriz.

Q: That must have been an interesting assignment.

COON: It was fine. It was great.

Q: ...northern Iran and...

COON: Yes. I had a Vice Consul, and an Admin Assistant. The Admin Assistant's wife was my American secretary, and that was the staff.

Q: What really was your principal work there?

COON: There wasn't a hell of a lot because the post was fairly quiet at that point. It had quieted down a great deal from previous years when there had been more of an American military presence up there, and that sort of thing. It was basically the responsibilities of a small consulate anywhere: show the flag, report, get around, keep in touch with developments, supervise the branch PAO's USIA program, take care of visiting firemen. There was precious little negotiation although occasionally somebody would get in trouble and I'd have to do something about it. It was a quiet post but I really enjoyed it. Every month I'd drive around the big lake, the Urmia, and every other month or so I'd get down to

Sanandaj in Kurdish territory. I did a lot of reporting on the Kurdish situation. The rebellion was going on in Iraq at that time.

Q: How did we view the Shah and his government at that particular juncture?

COON: Very benevolently. He was our man. One thing they did want me to do: they wanted me to get the worm's eye view about the Shah's so-called white revolution which he'd just launched, and in fact a couple of the villages he'd first launched it in were in my district.

Q: This was land redistribution.

COON: Yes. This was land redistribution to the peasants, taking it away from the rich zamindars__. And I went around, and I watched the registration process, and I talked to the villagers through interpreters, and I talked to the zamindars__. And then I reported back in some detail that it was for real. It was really happening, and it was creating administrative problems, but they were being resolved, and they were moving ahead with it. And that was some contribution, I guess, that people found out about that. I also straightened out the embassy about a misconception they had about the relationships of the various Kurdish factions to the Shah. Other than that, I just had wonderful experiences.

Q: Then after that relatively brief tour...

COON: ...standard two years.

Q: ...you were back in Washington.

COON: I came right back to the same place I'd left, only one notch up.

Q: You had the desk for India, Nepal and Ceylon.

COON: Yes.

Q: It was Ceylon in those days?

COON: Yes, I think so. But the office basically had always existed in three parts. The office director, and deputy director, and then one part was economic for all five countries. One was political for India, Nepal, Ceylon; and one was political for Pakistan and Afghanistan. Pakistan then, of course, including what's now Bangladesh. So Bruce Laingen had the Muslim side of it, and I had the Hindu side of it, Sid Sober had the economic side of it, and Dave Schneider was the deputy director, and Carol Laise was the director. Everybody had moved up a notch after Kenneth Galbraith had succeeded in getting rid of the previous office director. And they wanted me back after two years, which was nice. So I took over Dave's old job, continued working for him, and had a very interesting three years. I should say only two years, actually, because during the third year my wife came down with terminal cancer and in fact it was after about a year and a half, and she finally passed away in '68. That was kind of a rough period for me. By that time Doug Heck had replaced Carol Laise. Doug was an old friend of mine, and Doug spared me, shielded me from too many office requirement while I was going through the worst of that.

Q: On the Indian Affairs, did you find...just to give somebody whose coming from outside a feel between the two desks. You're saying Pakistan, Afghanistan on one side, and then there was another. You were in charge of the Indian, Nepal, and Ceylon side. How did the two organizations work together? I mean, were there problems tending to...

COON: Bruce and I always got along fine. We didn't have any problems—occasional problems with Sid on something or other, but that was not Indo-Pak, it was econ-political. We didn't have anything serious there either. No, the office as a whole presided over this situation. And then the office was subsequently broken up by the Country Directorates System into basically a Pakistan Country Director, and an Indian Country Directorate. And everybody agreed that this might be a good idea in West Africa or someplace, but a lousy

idea in South Asia because it meant that inevitably advocacy penetrated a level higher in the Department. And it did tend to work that way.

Q: Were there any major problems at this particular period?

COON: We had the perennial problem of arms aid to Pakistan. I think Chet Bowles was there, yes, during this period of '65-'66-'67. I think that was Chet's second incarnation there, and he was, of course, constantly trying to remind Dean Rusk about India being the world's largest democracy, and our stake in India, and what were we prejudicing it all for, for this army of Pakistan.

Q: What was the rationale, and how much did those of you who were looking after the political side, subscribe to our strong military support of Pakistan which obviously was souring relations with India?

COON: I never got too worked up over it. I argued rather vigorously with my Indian friends that they should understand this, and that they should swallow it, and that they were much bigger than Pakistan, and much stronger, and that this wasn't going to hurt them. They argued that it was hurting them, and that Pakistan was the enemy, and I just didn't understand the ancestral antipathies. Whereupon I would explain that I did understand them and give my interpretation of them, and we get off into that. And then we'd end up good friends but not changing.

Q: What was our rationale, and how well founded was it, of putting so much arms into Pakistan?

COON: I think our Pakistan policy has always been one of the more complex national, bilateral polices, that we've had in the Department. Pakistan has so many facets, and so many different ways it impinges on US interests that balancing them out has always been a very, very tough thing. And, of course, early on, in the ''50s our rationale was the Cold War rationale. Here we saw Pakistan standing stalwartly facing the Soviet threat, and

pretty much blind to the fact that Pakistan was stalwartly facing mostly the Indian threat as they saw it. Later on the thing got complicated as nuclear proliferation became an issue. And I did have a considerable role to play in the late "60s, the period we're talking about, as sort of the Indian nuclear guru and I got to know a whole lot of people who were in the non-proliferation business, and helped advise them on how to keep the Indians from developing the bomb. And our policy worked during the "60s. It wasn't until a little later that Indians went and got the bomb. But that's another story.

Q: We do keep hopping around...

COON: That's my fault.

Q: No, no. It's mine. I would like to dwell on this but I know there's a time constraint here.

COON: My only constraint is I've got a house guest arriving about 11:00. Other than that my time is yours.

Q: We'll move to...you were in the War College. Let's talk just a little about the nuclear side. Did we feel in India that they were on brink...what could you, at the desk level, do to stop nuclear proliferation?

COON: The first thing, and the most important thing I could do was, stop the US government from threatening the Indians with retaliation of various sorts if they did go ahead with the bomb. Because they would have gone right ahead just to show that they weren't subject to US blackmail. The second thing I encouraged, I wasn't exclusively responsible for this: I encouraged a meeting of peer groups on both sides—scientists, economists, strategic thinkers, and so forth. They organized a series of basically non-government think tanks. I think the first took place in Pune around '68, in which eminent American scholars got together with their Indian opposite numbers and discussed the pros and cons of Indian nuclear weapons programming from India's point of view as they saw it. The Indians respected this kind of thing, being consulted as equals and having their two-

bits in. And they were equals. I mean, hell, they could argue with us 'til the cows came home.

This negative approach of not threatening them, this positive approach of intellectual discourse outside the strict inter-governmental framework, I think was reasonably effective. The Indians themselves were very divided as to whether to go ahead with the weapons program or not. And a negative approach did not strengthen the proponents, while the positive approach did strengthen the other.

Q: Who were on the negative side within the Department, or within the government?

COON: Do you mean the Indian Government?

Q: No, our government, on the negative side of trying to use the threatening position?

COON: I think it was tending to be a kind of visceral reaction of some of the “hard nosed” managers of foreign policy up at high levels—”God damn, if the Indians are going to do this, they ought to know that such and such...” But it really wasn't a big enough issue to command their undivided attention, as they were always busy doing something that was capturing headlines, and this was not capturing headlines. I can't give you an office by office rundown on this, but ACDA was always off in left field someplace.

Q: That's the arms control...

COON: They required more educating than most, and SP was pretty good at that point.

Q: SP being?

COON: Policy Planning. I think it was Ray Garthoff or somebody was up there at that time. And there were various other power centers that were concerned with this around the Defense Department, the NSC, and various parts of the Department. I dealt with all of them, and then they would deal with each other without me on other things, and then with

me on the Indian nuclear thing. On the Indian nuclear thing I packed a good bit of clout because I was the only one that knew the subject at hand.

Q: I just wanted to ask one question. You were with the War College from '68 to '69. Did you have a problem explaining you might say, the State Department's side to the military people? Maybe that's the wrong term, that there are political ramifications to the use of military force, or pressures, in other countries?

COON: I had the impression, which has been fortified subsequently, that some of them were not very bright, while some of them were quite bright, in the War College. But they've all grown up in a kind of a cocoon. Their formative years, after their education, and since they joined the armed services, have been sealed off from the outside world to a considerable extent by the rigors of making it in a highly controlled, and highly limited environment. I mean, it's limited, but these damned weapons systems are complicated as hell, and a full brained man can spend a mature lifetime actively engaged in just being a good soldier. But the better ones know that they're restricted, and so they get in where they're rubbing shoulders with the State Department people and regardless of what their prejudices might be, you're regarded as a kind of an oracle and they treat everything you say with the deepest respect. In fact, I had to watch out, and stop being flip, because they'd take that seriously.

Q: So then we move back to Kathmandu where you went...

COON: Well, not quite because I had a year in the Director General's office in Personnel after I left the War College. I was put in charge of Presidential appointments.

Q: What was your impression...this would be the Johnson administration?

COON: Yes, this was '69-'70, Nixon. I came face to face with the political side of the process for the first time in my career and it was very educational. A little discouraging in spots but on the whole it was a dose of realism.

Q: From a practical point of view in a series of interviews we've been doing, the Foreign Service impression of Nixon was that probably there was no President who had done his homework more, and thought more about foreign affairs, than Nixon. Did you find this at all reflected in the appointments, or was it just plain business as usual?

COON: I remember sharing the general impression that he was pretty savvy about the world outside the United States, and that he was quite a competent leader in terms of our international role. I do not recall anything in the caliber of the people whom he appointed that fortified or supported that impression. I got that impression from other sources. There were some real twerps that got put in. Nixon himself didn't put his cronies in, except perhaps for a few very key appointments that had already happened by the time I got on board the Director General's office. I got there in time to get all the follow-up stuff and the sort of second pressing of the political process, so to speak. There were some pretty awful dregs there.

Q: What did we do? We, as the Foreign Service Director General says, "Okay, here it goes, here's your homburg and you're an Ambassador and out you go."

COON: It's a very complicated process, the incubation or gestation of an Ambassador. There are all sorts of different stages, and you wait for the White House to give you the signal at certain stages, and then you run. So I developed good relations at the working level over in the White House, and when they gave a blip on such and such, I ran, and a lot of people were getting things back and forth. And then a certain amount of talking to some of these characters that would be stumbling in from Texas or Ohio or someplace, not really knowing where the country they were being assigned was, and setting up briefings for them, and holding them by the hand. My predecessor told me rather cynically that this was the best job in the Department from the point of view of getting a good DCM assignment because you'd be the first one these characters would meet and they'd immediately decide that you must be the greatest one in the whole Service. Because we did look pretty good compared to their peers in the real estate business in Ohio or

someplace. I don't want to sound snotty or superior about the Foreign Service. And there were career people that had gone political so to speak.

I remember Graham Martin paid a great deal of attention to me during the period when his appointment to Rome was hanging in the balance, and once it was settled that was the last I saw of him. But, anyway, I felt the force of his personality for a little while there.

Q: Graham Martin runs through a number of the interviews from Paris to Rome.

COON: I'm sure. He's not a forgettable type.

Q: After that you had this assignment to Kathmandu as Deputy Chief of Mission from '7(?)—'73. How did that come about?

COON: Well, Carol Laise having gone through her second DCM...after all I had first been associated with Carol in the '50s in Delhi. She was the political officer who vetted my socialism thing, and then I had worked for Carol on the India desk in the '60s twice. It was Carol's ascension to the Ambassadorship in Kathmandu in 1966—or the end of '66—anyway, I'd been working for her for the better part of that year, a year and a half. So she knew me, and thought well of me, and thought well enough of me anyway to think that maybe when Gene Boster's tour expired that she'd want me as her third DCM. So she asked me, and I said, “Sure. I've always wanted to go to Kathmandu.” I had always wanted to go to Kathmandu. I'd been there several times on field trips, I knew I liked the country. I knew I liked the environment, and the people, and understood the challenges they were facing. So I said, “Yes, indeed.” So we went early in 1970 and we had three and a half very full years there.

Q: What did you do?

COON: I managed the place; I was the Charge maybe a third of the time, because Carol was married to Ellsworth who was Ambassador in Saigon and she spent a lot of time

down there with him. I did almost everything an Ambassador does, and a great deal more management than an Ambassador should do. I managed the post, I supervised some of the reporting, I tried not to oversupervise it. We did have a political officer and an economic officer but they needed help sometimes. And I worked on all kinds of problems—some of them of an administrative nature. I mean, who is entitled to commissary privileges—that sort of thing. School problems, real estate problems. Our embassy building was deplorable at that time—about the worst in the world and I outfoxed FBO.

Q: Foreign Buildings Organization.

COON: Yes, they're the enemy as far as the Foreign Service is concerned. I've never heard a Foreign Service officer who had a good word for FBO. And I had learned particularly in Tabriz that if you figured out what you wanted, and told them, they'd do the exact opposite. So when they came to Kathmandu—and this is the literal truth—I figured out exactly what we wanted to do, and I told them the opposite and they did what I wanted them to do. I told them that we needed a big fancy new embassy right across from the palace—which would have been sudden death. So they settled for revamping a more modest building up the road which gave us in the end an extremely satisfactory chancery at one-tenth the cost, which is not the way they like to operate. They don't want us to be satisfactory, and they like to spend money. This is on the record I trust?

Q: Oh, yes.

COON: Good. I have more to say about FBO.

Q: Let's take a minute. Why has FBO been such a problem for so long? I mean after all these are the people who put up our buildings, and see to at least the major redoing of our buildings abroad, and why shouldn't this just be an integral part of the State Department where its worked out a mutually satisfactory method of operation?

COON: I've puzzled over this. Of course, the obvious answer to the question, but its superficial, is independent funding, independent relationship with Congressional committees. But the reason why this should lead them to do things directly contrary to the interests of the working stiffs that are going to have to work in their premises...it's a situation which may no longer continue. I'm talking about the situation 20 years ago.

Q: Wayne Hayes...

COON: Wayne Hayes, etc. before he slipped on his zipper. Anyway, I personally can see only one rational explanation and I haven't one shred of proof or evidence, and that is corruption. And I'll just state that that is pure speculation on my part. If anybody wants to challenge me, I won't be able to prove it but I've thought and thought and I can't imagine any other rational explanation for a phenomenon which I have observed over the years in many different places, and many different forms.

Q: The bigger it is, the more room there is for maneuvering. In Kathmandu what were— we're talking now in the '70 to '73 period— our interests in Nepal, American interests?

COON: Basically, to keep it quiet. Our principal interest was the negative strategic interest that Nepal had a singular capacity to embroil India and China into a major war—a major Asian war—and we wanted to contribute to conditions which would make that very unlikely.

Q: Why could this possibly come about? What scenario are you talking about?

COON: The scenario would be very easy if the Indians invaded Nepal and the Chinese decided to react. And the Indians, if you look at the history and the relationship in detail, and then what the Indians did around 1959, '60, '61 with cross border operations when things happened in Nepal that they didn't like. Indian attitudes toward the Himalayan kingdom as being yet another principality that they hadn't gotten around to cleaning up and regulating. This was not outlandish. In fact, it still isn't in what the Indians are doing right

now is systematic, that this estimate was not badly founded. It's far fetched at the moment, but it's not out of the ball park completely. Let's put it this way, the principal reason this scenario is unlikely to happen now is more a function of Chinese disinterest than of Indian restraint.

Q: How did you find the staff in Kathmandu?

COON: Mixed. The locals were very good. The Americans—some were quite good, some were not so good, and I found dealing with A.I.D. quite fascinating, and dealing with other agencies more or less interesting. One in particular, the one that's usually nameless, provided some interesting tests of my management negotiating skills.

Q: Did you find this other agency responsive, or was it sort of going off on its own?

COON: They'll be responsive within certain limitations, and then you get into a grey area and it suddenly becomes very murky. You suddenly see things are not happening but you can't quite figure out why. They're very good at making a difficult situation invisible. I always got along very well. I've always had some sympathy for the agency. My father was personally responsible for the first interagency row in history back in 1942 in Tangier when he was one of Wild Bill Donovan's first rover boys in the OSS and he was parked in the Tangier legation and the minister didn't like him. The minister's wife objected to the sound of the radio which was tapping out Morse code messages to Gibraltar about the presence of German U-boats in the Straits of Gibraltar. So, since it disturbed her sleep, they ordered the station closed and that started the first CIA-State Department row. So I tell my CIA buddies that—we've always been on cordial terms—it isn't worth it, we're all fighting on the same team basically. Its just we have different requirements. And they do have some things that they absolutely have to keep very, very private and I respect that. And I respected that as DCM, and later on as Ambassador and I never really had any problems.

Q: Well, because we're going to be coming back to Nepal...you left there in '73 and you were a Diplomat in Residence?

COON: Yes, for a year.

Q: ...at Carlston College, and then you moved from '74 to '76 as...

COON: Deputy Chief of Mission in Rabat.

Q: Who was the Ambassador then?

COON: Bob Neumann. I had met Bob when I was DCM in Kathmandu. I admired him, I liked him. I found his style, and his wit, refreshing and quite different from the run of the mill diplomat. He's not a career man, but he's very, very much an old school diplomat and he did rather well in Kabul as far as I know. And he could have done quite well in Morocco, only his career there was cut rather short, as it was in subsequent assignments.

Q: What cut it short?

COON: Let's put it this way, he didn't see eye to eye with Henry Kissinger on everything. Henry was Secretary of State. I don't think I'm revealing any great secret if I suggest that possibly Henry was responsible for his early removal.

Q: What, when you were there, this '74 to '76 period, what was our particular concern in Morocco?

COON: I've got to try to separate this out because my more recent memories from '79 to '81 are so much more vivid. And this was still during the Nixon-Ford administrations. I guess we were still on something of an even keel as far as our military relationship with Moroccans were concerned. We had a substantial arms program, and then a big military mission there. The Spanish pulled out of the western Sahara during my period there and the king staged his famous green march in which he sent hundreds of thousands of

Moroccans walking across the border into the face of the Spanish guns, which didn't fire. If the King had been more popular he would have been another Gandhi out of it but he had a bad reputation among American liberal circles so nobody heard much about this. But it was a fantastic development, and the Moroccans—at least the northern part of the western Sahara—after cutting a deal with the Mauritanians and started fighting them. That was just revving up when I left.

Q: What was your impression of the king...

COON: Hassan. He started as a playboy and has ended up as a very astute...one of the most astute, and skillful leaders on the Middle Eastern scene. He has shown real leadership in spite of his rather bad reputation. Considerable vision—he talks like a visionary at times, but when it comes to the manipulative sides of his role he's very skillful.

Q: At the time you were there, why did he have a bad reputation in the United States?

COON: Again, I'd rather talk about that when we get to the next time that I was dealing with him, because I can speak with a clearer memory. In fact he had a good reputation with the administration, the Republican administration. But the King has always been ideologically litmus-like as far as American politics are concerned. Republicans tend to like him, and Democrats tend to dislike him. That may be an over simplification, and probably was in terms of Dean Rusk's day, but certainly there was a...let me come to that after we get through the Foreign Service Institute.

Q: Okay. You went to the Foreign Service Institute as Deputy Director. This was '76 to '79.

COON: Yes. I came back a few months after Neumann left. I had been thinking of staying on for three years but I felt on balance...I mean Bob Anderson had come in with ideas of his own regarding his own DCM of choice. And I felt staying on was a little bit pushing it, and also I was developing a little bit of a high blood pressure situation and they felt I should come back for treatment, which they did and they fixed it.

Q: You were Deputy Director of the FSI for a while.

COON: Three years.

Q: What were you doing?

COON: I was helping George Springsteen manage it. I was personally running the Diplomat in Residence program, did a lot of traveling around America for that. And George gave me a kind of license to go around the various parts of the Institute and shake things up where I felt like it. And I chose to shake up the language school, which I did. I think the results are still evident. It was a revolution whose time had certainly come. The manager of the language school, Jim Frith, had been there since the beginning and had run the place in a tightly controlled fashion. I began to talk to linguists and found that all sorts of opportunities were being overlooked, and persuaded the school and the management to bring in some important changes. I got the Peace Corps experience in training kids in foreign languages sort of focused into the process too. And I got some fairly basic changes in personnel assignment practices for junior officers wired in, that made sense. And some changes in curriculum and teaching approaches. It was interesting and in the meantime I also carried on and did my job as DCM for the professional studies, and area studies, and the family liaison people.

Q: Were you there during the change over to the consular training? Or did that happen before?

COON: A new consular program had just been started a year or two earlier and I sort of helped with some of the follow-on problems there, and helped transfer that experience to the administrative training program. But I didn't help very much, I mean there were experts that were doing it and I was generally supervising. When I talk about what I've accomplished, I'm distinguishing between a general supervisory role where I was there and approved what was going on, and situations like the language school where I

intervened personally and reached down and banged heads and actually things changed as a result of my direct intervention.

Q: Did you find that the FSI was well plugged in to the operations of the State Department?

COON: That's always a question. Springsteen fought that one very hard. George was not one to be overlooked or ignored by the powers. He was quite frequently at odds with the Director General's office on various aspects of personnel. I mean there is an instinctive and natural tendency in any system for this kind of confrontation to occur between people who regard training as a convenient place to park officers that are either unemployable, or temporarily out of the loop, and people who regard training as sort of a cost effective basis as something where you've got to put your best officers at the right time and with priority.

Now there was a considerable overlap of views between the personnel and the trainers, but every once in a while this basic difference would rear its head in one way or another. I would certainly regard my Diplomat in Residence program as a safety valve to let off a lot of steam on the tension on what you do with senior officers who are temporarily out of the loop.

No, I think it was a healthy situation with George there with his capacity to attract attention, even when people didn't want to give it to him, which he had.

Q: Then we come back to North Africa.

COON: Yes. I in effect stepped down a level in rank by taking an office director job where I'd been in a sort of DAS type job.

Q: Assistant Secretary.

COON: Deputy Director was ranked with DAS's and it was a little bit awkward because, just as I did it, my wife, who'd been office director, became a DAS in NEA. But she had

South Asia and was very busy with Afghanistan and all that, and I had North Africa. I worked for Maury Draper who was DAS and had responsibility among other things for North Africa. But, unfortunately, he also had responsibility for Lebanon, and he was much more concerned with Lebanon than North Africa. I can't really fault his judgement. Anyway, I operated without terribly much supervision from Maury, except when I clamored for it. That was one of my incarnations that I look back on with more pleasure because I stepped into a situation in which the US government was deeply divided regarding our North African policy. Not Qadhafi. I mean it was hard to be divided about Qadhafi, but about Morocco specifically, and to some extent Tunisia and Algeria. There were people in Policy Planning, and certainly people in the African Bureau, and to some extent they had Cy Vance's ear and felt that the Moroccan regime was, a) bad; and b) a loser and bound to change. As one of them said when I said, “Look, why do you constantly talk about doing nice things for the Algerians, who are kicking us around all the time, and doing horrid things to the Moroccans who have been our friends and allies for centuries?”

Q: They were the first people to seek us out. We're talking about 1778.

COON: Right. “Well,” this person answered, “Carl don't you realize the Algerians have already had their revolution.” That's a direct quote. And the theory was, that the Moroccans were on the skids, they were losing the war with the Polisario, revolution was incipient and was virtually inevitable. The King might last another year or two, but he wouldn't last more than. It was this vision that was in effect dominating US policy to the extent that...and there were large elements of that sentiment in Congress on the Hill too.

Q: I find it just strange.

COON: It was very strange but...

Q: There doesn't seem to be anything...it's not as though they were crossing us, or doing something...

COON: No. Remember the Shah had just been thrown out and here was another King. It was a little bit of a reaction to that. And then perhaps I'm overstating the point of view a little bit, but I don't think I am very much. I mean that was a direct quote I gave you about the Algerians have already had...I didn't believe in being mad at the Algerians or anything. I mean, sure they gave us a hard time in the UN, but actually we had a mutually profitable economic relationship which we were interested in continuing. I couldn't see why...I mean it wasn't a zero sum game for us between the Algerians and the Moroccans. I didn't see why we couldn't revert to a more normal stance towards the Moroccans, and keep the Algerians more or less where they were. But that was another argument. “Oh, if you're nice to the King, then you're going to lose the Algerians, we're going to lose the oil, the natural gas thing, and so forth.” I questioned the assessment of the King's fallibility. I questioned the assessment that was being produced, I think, because they felt it was what was wanted, that the Moroccans were losing the war. And I plunged full steam ahead to try to change those aspects of our policy that the Moroccans found particularly repulsive. They had this very limited number of aging F-5As that were their principal tactical weapon against the Polisario ability to strike unexpectedly at various outposts on the desert. We wouldn't even supply spare parts for the F-5s they had, let alone supply new ones. And there were questions of reconnaissance aircraft and that sort of thing. I found that I had powerful friends. The NEA Bureau was very much on my side. In fact, they'd recruited me because they knew that I would do this.

And I did a lot of traveling out there. I was out there a quarter of the time on field trips, and negotiated unilaterally with the Algerians and the Moroccans. And worked very hard developing contacts on Hill. Wrote quite a large number of papers of one kind or another, and used every trick I'd ever learned in the clearance process for telegrams. Brzezinski in the White House in the NSC was strongly pro-King and felt strongly...between Brzezinski and the military—DOD was on this side too, couldn't understand what was going on with our good military relationship with the Moroccans. Anyway, by the time the election came along we'd pretty much turned things around.

Q: This is the election of '80? Reagan.

COON: Yes. And we turned things around to the point where the Moroccans were getting their spares, and we were negotiating for F- 5Es. I don't know, the exact record may be a little different. We were moving ahead with these spotter aircraft. The whole atmosphere had changed. The Moroccans were very encouraged by their new relationship with us. Then the election came along, and from my parochial point of view, it constituted a kind of referendum on the failed policy of Vance, and to some extent, the President. Carter had always been a little bit ambivalent, but leaning a bit toward...well, it's hard to say. It was hard to pin him down. He had Brzezinski in one ear, and Vance in the other, and it was not clearly identified, which camp he was in, on this Moroccan policy. But it was a pretty clear cut case in the election insofar as Reagan campaigned on foreign policy issues at all, it was “we help our friends.” So the new gang came in and I was in very good odor because I'd been fighting on the right side. I'd been keeping in touch with Bob Neumann, among other people, even though he was out of office. And he came in as head of the State Department transition team and he brought me in as his deputy, on the professional side, not on the political side. So I got a couple of people I knew, and trusted, and we set up a small staff and for a couple of months there we were damned busy. That was an extraordinary experience, where I was half political and half career. And everybody in the building was jumping returning my phone calls instantly, and that sort of thing. It was real power, a heady experience. I understand why people get addicted to the stuff. That's helped me shake the addiction. And, of course, I was ideally positioned to get an Ambassadorship at that point. And I got the one I wanted, which was Nepal. The suggestion was that I go to one of the Arab countries, but I said, “No.”

Q: Lebanon didn't appeal to you?

COON: No, it wasn't Lebanon. That wouldn't have appealed to me at all. But also there was the point that Jane, up through the career ranks, had really earned the embassy in

Dacca and was going to go out there and I wanted to go some place that wouldn't be too far away.

Q: Did you go at the same time?

COON: I went out in June, and she went out in August.

Q: For the same tour of duty?

COON: Yes, the same three year period.

Q: We're taking a return to Nepal. What was the situation? How did we feel about American interests in Nepal at that time?

COON: Basically things hadn't changed very much. If you take the umpteen countries that exist in the NEA area and rank them in order of importance as far as NEA front office is concerned, Nepal is either at or very close to the bottom. My instructions essentially were, keep it that way. We had all sorts of problems in South Asia but they weren't with the Nepalese particularly. They were with India primarily, and Pakistan, and of course, Afghanistan was the really big account at that point. This was still very early in the saga of the Soviet adventure there.

Q: The Soviets went in December of '79 into Afghanistan?

COON: Yes.

Q: So they were fighting a full scale war in Afghanistan—or I guess it was leading up to that at the time. How did this reflect on your work on Nepal? I mean, did this make them more interested in America?

COON: I think there's no question but what the Nepalese high command, the King and his principal advisers, and most of the political leadership in Nepal, were strongly influenced

by the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, in the direction you suggest. In the direction that the Soviets were not a reliable neighbor, and that strong US support was a very good hedge against Soviet adventurism, even though there were a lot of mountains between them and Soviet territory. They felt that way. They also felt equally that a stronger relationship with China was a good hedge against Soviet adventurism; China being more physically in between, even if less powerful. They also mistrusted out in the Indians even more than usual, because of the Indian close relationship with the Soviet Union. So all these things sort of operated in my favor in the sense that it increased my access to these people and influence with them—perhaps marginally, I don't know, it's hard to say.

Q: How were your relations with the King, and how do you evaluate him at that time?

COON: He had taken over—his father had died while I was DCM in January of '72, and Carol had been in Saigon and I was the Charge at that time. We went and presented ourselves to the new King the same day. I'd seen a little of him during that period. I knew him better than my predecessors had, when they took over as Ambassador. The palace is in many ways still a very traditional institution, and a very medieval kind of a thing. And the King rations out his exposures to foreign diplomats, and Ambassadors, very deliberately, and very sparingly. And I saw as much of the King, I believe, as any of the diplomats in Kathmandu, but I cannot really say that I got to know him well, or that I saw him frequently. It was sort of hard work getting to see him sometimes even when I needed to, except on ceremonial occasions when you wouldn't have a chance to talk—you just shake hands and say, “Congratulations on your National Day, your majesty,” or whatever. And his role is a curious one, because in theory he is an absolute monarch, but in a practical sense the country is modernizing fast enough and has developed enough modern institutions, and there are enough modern people running them in the country. So it isn't like the bad old days of the Ranas, when he could just order that something be done, and it would be done. Of course, in those bad old days there wasn't very much to do. It was isolated,

they had no communications. Mostly what was happening was what was happening in Kathmandu Valley, and life was just much more limited.

(I've got my house guest coming. This is Daniel Bliss 2nd, the grandson of the man who founded, and was the first president of the American University of Beirut.)

Let's cut this short. If you've got one more question maybe I can...or we can continue at some other time.

Q: We can cut this about here. Just say what do you feel in your career that gave you the greatest satisfaction.

COON: It's very, very hard to say. I'd have to think about that one.

End of interview